Rethinking Europe's external relations in an age of global turmoil: An introduction

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Abstract

The outlook for Europe's external relations has never looked so uncertain in the post-cold war era. A series of internal and external shocks – from the Eurozone crisis to the UK's Brexit referendum and civil wars and external interventions on Europe's borders – have shaken the EU to its foundations. Against a backdrop of external insecurity and global power shifts abroad, and institutional crisis and strategic drift at home, this article introduces the main themes and questions that guide the contributions to this special issue: *First*, how have recent transformations of the international system – declining Western dominance, a shift from unipolarity to multipolarity, and the return of geopolitical competition – affected Europe's search for stability, security and influence in global affairs? *Second*, how have external perceptions of the EU's position, power and influence in global affairs changed in recent years, particularly in response to ongoing crises in the EU's internal governance? And *third*, how can the EU respond to the dramatically altered external environment and newly arising threats, and to what extent does the new EU Global Strategy of 2016 meet the challenges that the continent faces?

Keywords

European foreign policy; EU Global Strategy; Brexit; Geopolitics; Multipolarity; European integration; EU external relations

Introduction

The outlook for Europe's external relations has never looked so uncertain in the post-cold war era. A series of internal and external shocks have shaken the EU to its foundations. Internally, the global financial crisis and the subsequent Eurozone crisis have caused severe economic dislocation. Europe's single currency, once hailed as the pinnacle of European integration, is now regarded by many as an economic liability and a potential source of future disintegration. The EU may have so far managed to avoid the breakup of the Eurozone, but the UK's referendum vote in favour of exiting the EU ('Brexit') has revealed just how fragile Europe's project of 'ever closer union' has become. After successive rounds of EU enlargement, the Union is facing for the first time in its history the prospect of losing a member state. Externally, widening tensions in the Middle East, civil war in Syria, the Ukraine crisis and the rise of a revisionist Russia have undermined the EU's long-standing desire to create a ring of stable neighbouring countries on its southern and eastern flank. Further afield, global geopolitical changes are accelerating as the rise of emerging powers is eroding the West's dominant position in the international system. Even the transatlantic relationship has been thrown into doubt. With the election of Donald J. Trump as the 45th President of the United States, a deep rift has opened between the US and many European countries that is forcing European leaders to rethink the continent's international position and global security strategy.

The change in perceptions of Europe's strategic position could hardly have been more dramatic. Just over a decade ago, some analysts speculated about the European Dream 'quietly eclipsing the American Dream' (Rifkin 2004) and the EU emerging as the 'next superpower' that will shape the global order in the twenty-first century (Leonard 2005). In contrast, more recent assessments of Europe's economic and political model provide a decidedly gloomier outlook (Merritt 2016; Gillingham 2016; Rachman 2016). The conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East are widely seen as 'real threats to the Union's long-standing objective of facilitating a zone of peace, stability and prosperity in its neighbourhood' (Mueller 2016, 359), with many analysts declaring the European Neighbourhood Policy 'dead' (Tocci 2014). To make matters

worse, European leaders are found to be lacking in strategic foresight and unable to forge a common position. As Howorth and Menon argue,

> European policy-makers and commentators have largely engaged in a display of collective hand wringing rather than a process of strategic reflection. At the heart of the problem is the reluctance particularly of larger European states to confront the fact that their individual ability to address the various challenges facing them is diminishing. The challenges posed by today's world require a coherent collective European response' (2015, 11).

Against this backdrop of external insecurity and global power shifts abroad, and institutional crisis and strategic drift at home, this special issue takes stock of Europe's external relations with major powers and regions that are critical to the continent's future. It asks three interconnected questions: *first*, how have recent transformations of the international system – declining Western dominance, a shift from unipolarity to multipolarity, and the return of geopolitical competition – affected Europe's search for stability, security and influence in global affairs? *Second*, how have external perceptions of the EU's position, power and influence in global affairs changed in recent years, particularly in response to ongoing crises in the EU's internal governance? And *third*, how can the EU respond to the dramatically altered external environment and newly arising threats, and to what extent does the new EU Global Strategy of 2016 meet the challenges that the continent faces?

The contributions to this special issue originate from a two-year research project conducted under the auspices of the Dahrendorf Forum, an international collaboration between the Hertie School of Governance, London School of Economics and Political Science, and Stiftung Mercator. The project examined Europe's external relations with major powers and regions that are of strategic importance to the continent: the United States, Russia and China as major global powers in the new multipolar order of the twenty-first century; and Turkey and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region as critical, and increasingly troublesome, neighbours to the south and south east of Europe.

This special issue brings together leading scholars from international relations, political science, history and area studies to analyse the changing context in which Europe's strategic reorientation is taking place. Two contributions examine the larger

structural forces in the international system that serve to constrain Europe's room for manoeuvre: the enduring geopolitical conflict between the United States and Russia, which is limiting Europe's options for constructive engagement with an increasingly assertive and revisionist Russia (contribution by Wohlforth and Zubok); and the erosion of domestic support for neoliberal policies and economic globalization that is putting a strain on the transatlantic partnership between the United States and Europe (contribution by Burgoon, Oliver and Trubowitz). Two contributions focus on the crises that have afflicted Europe's relations with its Islamic neighbours to the South and Southeast: the fragmentation and dissolution of Middle Eastern and North African states after the Arab Spring, which has shown up Europe's failure to promote peaceful democratic change and stability in its Neighbourhood (contribution by Harders, Juenemann and Khatib); and Europe's increasingly fraught relationship with Turkey, a long-standing Western ally that plays a critical role in the Syrian war and fight against ISIS (contribution by Keyman). A further contribution examines the political sensitivities involved in the increasingly close economic relationship between Europe and China, as is evident from the growing contention over Chinese foreign investment in Europe (contribution by Gippner and Rabe).

The special issue also considers the constraints on EU foreign and security policy and the options for developing Europe's global strategy. The first European Security Strategy (ESS) was launched in 2003, at a time when the European Union was in a comparatively strong position, preparing for a big enlargement push in central and eastern Europe. Thirteen years later, a new European Union Global Strategy (EUGS) was agreed in 2016 in response to a dramatically altered international environment. The new strategy, launched right after the UK's decision to seek an exit from the EU, is set within the context of a serious deterioration of the EU's security position, with an 'arc of instability' now surrounding the Union. Two contributions to this special issue examine the new EU Global Strategy, with a focus on how it was agreed (contribution by Tocci) and whether it meets the expectations of a strategic document (contribution by Smith). The final contribution examines Britain's referendum vote to withdraw from the EU and how it will affect external perceptions of Europe's international position (contribution by Oliver).

The remainder of this introductory article sets the scene for this special issue by framing the central questions that have guided the individual contributions. The first section reviews the transformation that the international system has undergone

since the beginning of the twenty-first century. The next section considers changes in the external perception of the EU as an international actor. The subsequent section discusses the scope for European agency amidst an increasingly hostile international structure. And the final section introduces the main themes and arguments of the contributions to this special issue.

The international context: multipolarity, insecurity and the return of geopolitics

The first question that animates this special issue concerns the changes in the external environment that Europe faces: how have global power shifts, declining Western dominance and the transition from an unipolar to an increasingly multipolar structure affected Europe's search for global stability and security? How has the return of a geopolitical logic in great power relations impacted on Europe's ability to shape international outcomes? That the international system has undergone a profound transformation since the early 2000s, when the EU's first Global Strategy was produced, is widely acknowledged (see contribution by Tocci). What remains unclear, however, is the extent to which Europe's strategic position has deteriorated as a consequence of these global changes, and whether and how the EU can respond to these external challenges. As several contributors to this special issue argue, the outlook for Europe's security has weakened and Europe's influence and standing on the global stage have declined as a consequence of the seismic shifts in international relations.

It has almost become a truism to argue that the international order is entering a new era in the twenty-first century. The rise of emerging powers from the Global South is bringing to an end the dominant position that the United States and its Western allies have enjoyed during the twentieth century (for a critical review of this debate, see Cox 2012). This global transformation, invariably referred to as the 'rise of the Rest' (Zakaria 2008), a global 'power shift' towards Asia (Mahbubani 2008) or simply 'Easternisation' (Rachman 2016), caps the end of what, with hindsight, looks like a historical anomaly: that Western powers were able first to colonize and later to rule large parts of the planet for over two centuries, largely based on the technological advantage that the industrial revolution had given them (Buzan and Lawson 2015). As

the large and populous societies of the Global South are catching up with the West, both economically and militarily, it is only a question of time before they can claim their rightful place in a refashioned international order. There is still uncertainty as to whether any single emerging power can replace the United States as the world's hegemon or whether US predominance will give way to a state of multipolarity (Posen 2009). However, few would dispute that the ongoing shift in economic strength will produce a corresponding shift in the distribution of political and military power.

Against this background of a dramatic sea change in international relations, Europe can no longer assume that the benign context of *Pax Americana,* the US-led international order of the post-1945 era, will persist into the future. For a brief time after the end of the cold war, the collapse of the Soviet empire seemed to reaffirm the universal appeal of Western liberal values. But Western triumphalism was short-lived and has given way to growing concerns over the effects of declining US and Western influence (Layne 2012). In Europe, too, uncertainty over the future of the international order has unsettled long-standing views about the continent's main strategic challenges. Whereas at the time of the 2003 European Security Strategy it was America's assertive unilateralism under President George W. Bush that unnerved Europe's political elite, today it is American decline and disengagement, combined with growing great power competition, that threaten to undermine Europe's vision of a rule-governed, multilateral, international order. If anything, the election of US President Donald Trump and his promise to 'Make America great again' has deepened European anxieties regarding the future role that the US is going to play internationally.

The decline in Western influence is not only the result of the 'rise of rest' and the emergence of a more multipolar distribution of power. It also reflects a deeper crisis in the liberal political-economic model that both the United States and Europe have espoused since 1945. In the economic sphere, the West's ideological hegemony has been challenged by the success of rising economies, most notably China, that seek to avail of the opportunities of an open global economy while constraining the development of liberal capitalism domestically. The once widely accepted Washington Consensus, an amalgam of liberal policy instruments intended to reform

developing countries, has long lost its sparkle as a recipe for economic success. Since the 1997 Asian financial crisis and especially since the 2008 global financial crisis, many countries in the Global South have followed heterodox economic policies, with the leading emerging countries in particular rejecting liberal economic orthodoxy (Ban and Blyth 2013). The Washington Consensus may not have been replaced by a new, alternative, developmental model – despite China's astonishing economic growth record, the much talked-about 'Beijing Consensus' simply did not materialize (Wiliamson 2012). But now that the vulnerabilities of the Western capitalist system have been exposed, the gospel of liberal market economics no longer carries much credibility around the world. This has important consequences for Europe and its desire to shape the multilateral international order, which is increasingly characterised not only by a diffusion of power but also by greater diversity of political-economic interests and values.

The predominance of Western liberalism has also been challenged by the persistence of authoritarian rule around the world. After the end of the Cold War, globalization was widely seen to have rendered obsolete systems of political and social organization that are built on a defence of national identity, cohesion and sovereignty. The then dominant ideology of liberal internationalism assumed that global convergence towards political liberalization and democracy would help build an open, liberal, international order. But despite the success of the so-called Third Wave of democratization at the end of the twentieth century, the global spread of democratic practices and values appears to have come to a halt. While some countries that underwent political liberalization ended up in a state of arrested democratization or saw early democratic gains disappear as illiberal democracy took root, others experienced the stabilization, and even strengthening, of authoritarian rule (Haggard and Kaufman 2016). The resilience of authoritarianism in the twenty-first century has dashed Western hopes of making democratization a cornerstone of the new international order (Klaas 2016). In the case of the European Union, it has also shown the futility of basing security on the global spread of democracy. Unsurprisingly, the confident assertion in the European Security Strategy of 2003 that '[t]he best protection for our security is a world of well-governed democratic states' has not made it into the new EU Global Strategy of 2016.

Barely two decades into the twenty-first century, Europe thus faces a series of international changes that challenge its long-standing assumption that international

stability and prosperity rest on the continuation of Western dominance built around US hegemony. Europe needs to reassess the altered global environment in order to arrive at a viable strategy for securing the continent's place within a changing international order. This special issue seeks to contribute to the process of strategic re-orientation by identifying some of the drivers of international change that impinge on Europe's quest for global influence and security.

Images of Europe: Outside Perceptions of a Continent in Crisis

The second question that informs this special issue concerns the way outsiders view Europe's position in the international system: how have external perceptions of Europe's power and influence in global affairs changed in recent years, particularly in response to ongoing crises in the EU's internal governance? And to what extent do external perceptions of Europe match European self-perceptions?

In the past, the study of European foreign policy has been characterized by a distinctive 'inside-out' perspective that focuses on the EU's internal identity, interests and institutional structure and how these internal characteristics give rise to a distinctive approach to pursuing European interests and values abroad. A more recent research literature has begun to challenge this established framing by shifting the focus towards what might be described as an 'outside-in' perspective. Onar and Nicolaïdis, for example, advocate a 'paradigm shift that decenters the study and practice of Europe's international relations' (2013, 283), while Niemann and Bretherton urge scholars to go beyond the 'tendency in EU Studies to exaggerate the uniqueness of the EU' that has left the EU '(analytically) insulated from wider IR themes and the foreign policies of other "powers"' (2013, 263). Viewing Europe's international position from an 'outside-in' perspective involves two analytical moves: first, rather than treating Europe foreign policy primarily as a reflection of the EU's internal constitution and an outflow of Europe's internal interests and values, it places greater emphasis on understanding how Europe's international role is shaped by the structural environment that it finds itself in; and second, the de-centering agenda involves paying closer attention to other international actors' perceptions of EU interests, values and power, how these perceptions vary across different issue areas, and how such perceptions have changed over time.

One strand of this ‘outside-in’ literature is aimed at identifying the two-way flows of influence in Europe's engagement with the outside world. Whereas much of the literature on the EU’s foreign policy identity tends to focus on how the EU shapes international society - by exporting norms, policy solutions or governance models - more recent studies have emphasised the limitations of EU norm and policy export and the degree to which Europe is at the receiving end of external policy influences. In their 'integrative framework of EU-global interaction', for example, Müller et al. (2014) highlight four different ways in which the EU is connected to, and embedded in, global regimes. Their framework includes the traditional perspective on EU 'policy export' to the global level, which as the authors note is 'a demanding phenomenon occurring much less frequently than is commonly assumed' (2014, 1102-3). It also includes processes of 'policy promotion', where the EU promotes policies that do not conform with its internal policy environment; 'policy protection', where the EU defends domestic policies from external pressure for change; and 'policy import', where Europe itself is the recipient of international policy solutions (ibid.). What emerges from this typology of engagement patterns is a more nuanced and empirically rich picture of how the EU engages with the outside world and how in turn it is being shaped by external forces.

A second line of research has focused on the empirical study of external perceptions of the EU in global affairs. Rather than study European understandings of the EU's values and interests in a global context and how these are pursued internationally, this research has sought to examine how 'images of the EU vary depending on the issue at hand and across regions' (Chaban et al. 2013, 433). Several research teams have undertaking comparative studies that survey external perceptions (Lucarelli 2007; Chaban and Holland 2008; Chaban et al. 2009; Lucarelli and Fioramonti 2010). Usually based on elite interviews (Chaban et al. 2013) or discourse analysis (Lucarelli and Fioramonti 2010), researchers in this tradition have highlighted that perceptions of EU leadership and power are 'highly issue-specific' and also vary from region to region (Chaban et al. 2013, 446-7). They also demonstrate that the established representation of the EU as a different international actor that transcends more conventional interest calculations are not matched by outside perceptions (Lucarelli and Fioramonti 2010, 222-3).

A third line of enquiry has produced a more fundamental challenge to the established 'inside-out' framing of EU external relations and has called for a radical

'decentring' of Europe. In their introduction to a special issue of *Cooperation and Conflict*, Fisher Onar and Nicolaïdis (2013) set out an agenda for 'decentring' or 'provincialising' Europe that draws on the postcolonial intellectual tradition. Critiquing the 'normative power' perspective as 'a sophisticated version of the "EU-centric" narrative' (284), they call for a paradigm shift that takes the historical legacies of Euro-centrism and European colonialism seriously. Their decentring agenda involves three interrelated moves at both an empirical and a normative level: 'provincializing' Europe, which questions Eurocentric accounts of world politics and questions the civilisational assumptions made in conventional Eurocentric perspectives; 'engaging' non-European perspectives, which pays empirical attention to outside perspectives and pursues an engagement with others on their own terms; and 'reconstruction', which explores alternative ways of re-imagining Europe beyond Eurocentrism and gives rise to alternative approaches to external relations on the basis of mutuality and empowerment (ibid., 286-96). Taken together, the various strands of the postcolonial turn seek to bridge the gap between European Studies and International Relations in the study of EU external relations, positioning the debate on European power in a global comparative context.

This is not to suggest that the conventional 'inside-out perspective' on EU foreign policy has become redundant. Insofar as the European Union remains a unique political actor in international affairs, its internal composition, decision-making processes and foreign policy identity continue to deserve special scholarly attention. The *sui generis* nature of the EU has important implications for how the EU interacts with other countries and regions, as has been highlighted in research on the EU enlargement process (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005; Lavenex 2004) and European Neighbourhood Policy (Smith 2005; Kelley 2006); the diffusion of the European integration model to other regions (Grugel 2004; Lenz 2012); and the export of regulatory standards to other countries and global governance institutions (Bach and Newman 2007; Telò 2009; Damro 2012). In all these areas of EU foreign policy, the EU seeks to shape the external environment based on policy models that originate in Europe, and it remains important to understand the internal drivers of such international policy export. But in an age of rapid and profound international transformation, the question of how internal dynamics of European foreign policy interact with external drivers of international change gains a new urgency.

It also remains the case that the actorness of the EU in international affairs cannot be taken for granted, despite recent institutional developments that have strengthened its foreign policy role. For many international relations scholars, the central puzzle has always been that the EU, although not a state in the traditional sense, has managed to gradually expand its presence in global affairs. EU actorness depends on several factors: the legal authority to represent EU member States at the international level; the internal foreign policy coherence of the union and its ability to speak with one voice; the existence of a sufficiently effective institutional framework to conduct external relations and the availability of certain foreign policy tools; and external recognition by other international actors, most notably states and international organisations. In this context, recent research has demonstrated a significant strengthening of the EU's actorness, not least through successive treaty changes including most recently with the Lisbon Treaty (for an overview, see Smith 2014). However, in an international system that is transitioning from US dominance and unipolarity towards multipolarity and great power rivalry, and that is characterized by a more fractured and regionalized security environment, new questions about the EU's actorness are bound to arise.

The inside-out perspective has also been dominant in the other major scholarly debate on Europe's international role, which accepts that the EU has gained certain actor-type qualities but is focused on its identity as an international actor, the interests that it pursues and the types of instruments that it uses to achieve its objectives. This debate is organised around the claim that the EU is a different kind of international actor, a 'normative power' (Manners 2002) that seeks to shape international order in ways that set it apart from conventional powers in international society. Proponents of the normative power thesis argue that the EU is not aspiring to become a 'normal' great power but is instead seeking to promote a distinctive set of values and interests that are universal in nature (Manners 2006, 176). Being a post-Westphalian actor that has transcended the zero-sum logic of power politics, the EU pursues a different global order policy: working through 'ideas, opinions and conscience' (Diez and Manners 2007, 175), its diplomatic efforts are directed towards "the promotion and maintenance of negotiated order as a key approach to global governance" (Smith 2013) and the 'strengthening of not only international but cosmopolitan law, emphasising the rights of individuals and not only the rights of states to sovereign equality' (Sjursen, 2006: 249).

The normative power argument has been criticised from several different angles: Sjursen (2006) points to conceptual weaknesses, particularly with regard to the criteria and assessment standards for distinguishing normative from other forms of power. Bicchi (2006) questions the reflexivity and inclusiveness of the EU's approach to promoting global norms. Hyde-Price (2008) argues that its supposed championing of universal values and interests merely masks the pursuit of self-interest, while Falkner (2007) identifies political-economic interest constellations at the domestic level as more important foreign policy drivers than European values and identity. More recently, scholars have also taken aim at the Eurocentric nature of the 'normative power' concept, with a growing body of research arguing that EU self-perceptions of normative power do not necessarily match perceptions by other actors, especially in the Global South (Fioramonti and Lucarelli 2008; Fioramonti and Poletti 2008), or fail to achieve their desired impact (Tocci 2008). The introspective nature of the concept is clearly evident in Manners' original definition: normative power is said to derive primarily from the EU's internal constitution, identity and historical context (2002, 240-1), and the "most important factor shaping the international role of the EU is not what it does or what it says but what it is" (Manners, 2002, p. 252).

Although this special issue does not re-open the question of EU actorness and foreign policy identity as such, several papers seek to bring in external perspectives into the debate on the changing nature of Europe's external relations. They share an interest in reviewing EU-global interactions from the outside, by focusing on forces of continuity and change that originate in Europe's neighbourhood and other world regions. They add new empirical insights into the state of EU relationships with external powers and regions, from North America and China to Russia, Turkey and the Middle East. And they consider the challenges and opportunities that the EU needs to respond to if it is to develop a more effective global strategy.

A question of agency: Policy options for Europe in a constrained external environment

The third intention behind this special issue is to explore how the EU can react to the above challenges that have resulted from the dramatic deterioration in Europe's external strategic environment. We are particularly interested in understanding

whether the EU is capable of developing a strategic response that is both realistic and actionable: Have domestic and international crises led to greater recognition among EU member states that a common approach in foreign policy is needed? How far do recent institutional innovations enable the EU to play a more effective role in Europe's external relations, and has the EU gained a capacity for independent strategic thinking and planning? In other words, do ongoing crises in Europe and abroad have the potential to '"transform" the EU as an international actor' (Müller 2016, 370)?

That the EU's capacity to define and pursue foreign policy objectives has always been constrained is well understood in the research literature. From its early stages of development until today, the EU has been described as an incomplete power that lacks certain essential foreign policy instruments, such as independent military strength (Bull 1982), or as an emerging power that is held back by a gap between unrealistic expectations and insufficient capabilities (Hill 1993). Much has been made of the fact that EU foreign policy is only as good as the EU's member states allow it to be. To be sure, considerable progress has been made in establishing an institutional framework for a common EU-wide foreign policy, from the Common Foreign and Security Policy (1992) to the Common Security and Defense Policy (2003) and the creation of the European External Action Service (2010) (for an overview, see Smith 2014). However, powerful member states have never reconciled themselves with the idea that the EU might gradually come to be the main external representative of the Union. Intergovernmentalism still reigns supreme in European foreign policy-making, and differences in national interests combined with persistent sovereignty reflexes continue to hamper the development of EU foreign policy capacity.

External challenges such as the crises in the Ukraine and Syria have thus highlighted the structural weaknesses of European foreign policy. But crises can also serve as a wakeup call and may lead to renewed efforts at coordinating European foreign policy and strengthening EU-level institutions (Falkner 2016). Past crises in Europe have indeed been major triggers for new rounds of European integration, as neofunctionalist theories are keen to stress (Lefkofridi and Schmitter 2015). The disintegration of the Yugoslav state in the 1990s and the wars among its successor states provided a major impetus for the developing CFSP instruments (Jopp et al. 2009), while America's assertive unilateralism in the early 2000s prompted the EU to reassert its support for a multilateral international order (contribution by Tocci). The

question thus arises as to whether the recent crises described above will act as catalysts on the road towards a more united and effective European presence in international affairs, or whether they end up pulling the rug from under the fragile edifice of European foreign policy.

In the past, the debate on Europe's constraints on international action focused on the unwillingness of member states to cede authority in favour of joint decision-making and the weakness of EU-level institutions. More recently, the question of domestic support for European leadership in international affairs has increasingly entered the equation, particularly as the EU's legitimacy crisis has deepened. Two major sources of popular discontent – concern over rising economic inequalities, and resistance to rapid social and cultural change – have combined to feed a populist uprising against national and European elites (Inglehart and Norris 2016). The Eurozone crisis that followed the 2008 global financial crisis marked a serious turning point in the way the European integration project has been viewed. The EU's inability to solve the prolonged sovereign debt crisis and the economic malaise that Europe-wide austerity measures inflicted have fuelled rising euroscepticism not just in in France, Italy, and Spain but also in Germany (Torreblanca and Leonard 2013). Anti-European sentiment is now a firm part of the political programme of various populist parties that have capitalized on the continent's economic woes. From France's *Front National* (FN) to Germany's *Alternative fuer Deutschland* (AfD) and Britain's UK Independence Party (UKIP), right-wing populist parties have made the EU one of their main targets in their campaigns to defend national sovereignty against liberal cosmopolitanism.

The UK's EU referendum vote in June 2016 revealed just how damaging the rise of nationalist populism can be to European integration. The UK referendum result represents a decisive turning-point not only in British politics but potentially also in the history of European integration. While the outcome of the Brexit negotiations will not be known for some time, the threat of further exits from the EU has become more tangible. Of course, it is possible that the departure of a country that used to be described as Europe's 'awkward' partner may yet reinvigorate the push for closer cooperation and integration among the EU-27 (Menon and Salter 2006, 1318). But a more likely, and worrying, outlook is for anti-European populism to gather strength across the continent and undermine efforts for a strengthening of EU-level decision-making, including in foreign policy.

In the context of these external and internal challenges, the question of Europe's ability to think and act in a strategic manner has assumed a new urgency. In the past, European capitals were able to outsource global strategic thinking and action to the United States. Today, with US willingness to provide global leadership waning and the transatlantic relationship coming under increasing strain, European leaders are called upon to leave behind what Menon and Howarth (2015) have described as 'collective strategic denial' and formulate a vision of how the continent can collectively tackle emerging global challenges. Unlike the United States, which continues to benefit from a benign geographical position (Ikenberry 2014), Europe is far less likely to be insulated from direct threats to its territory from newly emerging security risks. Yet, existing responses among Europe's foreign policy elite suggest continuing uncertainty over whether, and if so how, the EU can become the main vehicle for formulating and implementing a collective global strategy for Europe. The adoption of the EU Global Strategy in 2016 suggests that, at a minimum, EU institutions are intent on forging such a strategic vision. But it remains far from clear whether the EU's new strategy document can deliver on this promise. This special issue, which provides one of the first accounts and evaluations of the EUGS (contributions by Tocci and by Smith), addresses the question of Europe's ability to act in the face of external changes and threats by focusing on the strategic responses that have emanated from Europe to date.

Overview of the contributions to the special issue

Despite the end of the Cold War, the relationship between Russia and the United States continues to have a critically important influence on Europe's security environment. In the first contribution to the special issue, **William Wohlforth** and **Vladislav Zubok** examine the current impasse in relations between Russia and the West and how it affects Europe's international position. The authors argue that due to structural forces at the level of the international system, the US and Russia are locked into a geopolitical conflict that requires pragmatic compromise between divergent interests. Russia's global power aspiration is not just a passing fad but needs to be taken more seriously as the outgrowth of Russia's predicament as a big country in a crowded and insecure geopolitical environment. This has clear implications for

Europe's desire to stabilize relations with an increasingly revisionist Russia. As Wohlforth and Zubok argue, the path to a pragmatic partnership with Russia that enhances Europe's security is steeper than commonly assumed.

The second contribution by **Brian Burgoon, Tim Oliver** and **Peter Trubowitz** shifts the focus from the international structural context to the domestic basis of foreign policy-making. The authors examine the challenges that the transatlantic relationship faces in an era where domestic support for the goal of freer movement of capital, goods, services, and peoples across national boundaries is waning. Their contribution draws on a variety of indicators to show that the neoliberal economic agenda is proving increasingly unpopular in the US and Europe. Burgoon, Oliver and Trubowitz argue that the erosion of domestic support for globalization is closely linked to the rise of populist parties and movements, and that this shift in domestic politics has troubling consequences for the future of the transatlantic partnership and liberal international leadership. Both the UK's Brexit vote and Donald Trump's election victory suggest that Western democracies may well be approaching critical tipping points.

In their article on 'Europe and the Arab world', **Cilja Harders, Annette Jünemann** and **Lina Khatib** investigate the dramatically changed context for Europe's relationship with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The authors base their analysis on the 'logics of action' approach, which helps to identify structural and ideational patterns of behaviour against the background of an evolving regional and global order. They argue that, since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and especially after the Arab uprisings of 2011, the logics of stability and bilateralism have become dominant drivers of policy on both shores of the Mediterranean, leading to a securitization of Europe's regional policies and pushing multilateral approaches aside. The EU has seen its influence in the region decline, and its long-standing desire to promote liberal and democratic values in the Arab world, a logic of action in its own right, has lost momentum. Arab regimes themselves are intensely focused on the logic of regime survival and have also prioritized bilateralism, both of which increasingly chime with European priorities. Harders, Jünemann and Khatib conclude with a critical reflection on the EU's new global strategy of 2016, which they find to lack convincing answers to the challenges that the Arab region poses. Instead of offering a viable strategy of 'principled pragmatism', it is pragmatism without principles that, according to the authors, inform the EUGS.

Fuat Keyman's contribution focuses on Turkey as the pivotal actor situated between Europe and the Middle East. Keyman discusses the various crises that have shaken Turkey to its core: the failed coup attempt of 2016 and the subsequent domestic crackdown; Turkey's involvement in the Syrian conflict and fight against ISIS; and the refugee crisis that has seen millions of Syrians seek shelter in Turkey. The author traces the deterioration in relations between Turkey and Europe, arguing that on both sides trust and willingness to collaborate have been in decline for some time. Yet, as Keyman points out, Europe's and Turkey's future security are closely intertwined, and neither side can solve the various crises that they face on their own. Keyman welcomes the shift in Europe's most recent foreign policy strategy towards the notion of 'principled pragmatism', which he sees as a potential basis for establishing a collaborative response to the unprecedented challenges that the era of global turmoil presents.

Wiebke Rabe's and Olivia Gippner's contribution analyses changing dynamics in European-Chinese relations by focusing on how growing Chinese investment in European companies and infrastructure projects is viewed in both Europe and China. The authors examine two prominent case studies, the takeover of German robotics manufacturer KUKA AG and investment in Britain's nuclear power project Hinkley Point C. Relying on a combination of media analysis and elite interviews with actors in China and Europe, the authors find that the rise in foreign direct investment flows by Chinese investors have created threat perceptions in the host countries, which in turn are leading to intensified efforts to develop regulatory processes that would protect strategically important or sensitive sectors. Europe may have focused in the past on developing deeper economic integration with China, but the gradual securitization of Chinese FDI is beginning to leave its mark on how individual investments by Chinese companies are perceived in key European markets.

Nathalie Tocci offers the first of two analyses that focus on the European Union Global Strategy (EUGS), the EU's new global strategy published in 2016. Having been closely involved in the creation of the document, the author offers an inside account of the deliberations and consultations that shaped the year-long drafting process. Tocci points out that, whereas the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS) was crafted in a relatively short period of a few weeks, the 2016 document had to go through a much more elaborate consultation process that included over 50 events involving foreign policy experts and NGOs, foreign ministry representatives

from EU Member States and even representatives of non-EU countries. Tocci also traces the evolution of European strategic thinking from the ESS's bold and optimistic notion of Europe as a transformative power to the more modest and realistic assertion of principled pragmatism in the EUGS. Unlike its predecessor, the new strategy of 2016 eschews lofty visions in favour of actionable objectives. It is now for the European institutions and Member States to take the necessary measures to implement it.

In the second contribution on the EU's new global strategy, **Karen Smith** offers a critical assessment of the EUGS and asks whether it deserves the label of a strategy and how well it responds to newly emerging international challenges. Smith opens her analysis with a brief discussion of the essence of strategic thinking in international relations, which can be summed up as an attempt to combine foreign policy ends, ways and means. Based on this understanding of strategy, Europe's past attempts at developing strategic documents, including for EU foreign policy, are found wanting. Smith argues that the EUGS itself represents a significant step forward in that it provides a more 'realist' guide for EU foreign and security policy in the near future. However, the author warns against hubristic optimism. Continuing internal divisions, combined with the UK's decision to seek an exit from the EU, pose severe challenges for the implementation of Europe's new strategy in an increasingly hostile international environment.

In the final contribution to this special issue, **Tim Oliver** examines Britain's referendum vote in favour of exiting the EU and the implications of a future Brexit for UK-European relations. As Oliver points out, resolving the question of how Britain can leave the EU involves not just one bilateral UK-EU negotiation but fourteen different sets of discussions and negotiations within the UK (about the respective powers and policies of the constituent parts of the UK political system), within the EU (about new balances of power between EU institutions and about the EU's future external relations) and between the UK and EU (about EU withdrawal, transitional arrangements and future relationships). Rather than focusing on the inside perspective of the Brexit negotiations, Oliver argues that we need to pay closer attention to how the UK-EU relationship is interpreted by international actors (esp. USA, Russia, China) and how Brexit may alter those external perceptions. Such an outside-in perspective is needed to understand how major powers' perceptions set the context in which new UK-EU relationships will emerge in the post-Brexit era.

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